

Kindred Souls by **RueEmerson**

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Summary: The Byers weren't the only ones who lost someone. But for Amanda, her father wasn't coming back. Jonathan/OC

1. Not Normal

2 WEEKS BEFORE WILL CAME HOME

Every day Amanda Greer went to school and returned home as if everything was normal.

Except it wasn't.

6 WEEKS AFTER WILL CAME HOME

Jonathan Byers first noticed the amber-eyed teen with dark auburn hair during lunch period. She kept to herself, dressed somewhat like a boy, and always had a pencil in her hand drawing in a tattered notebook.

He soon realized she sat behind him in biology and was in his art class. And he was pretty sure he had never heard her voice. Something about her intrigued him but he never found the courage to speak to her.

When they were assigned as lab partners, Jonathan got excited because maybe he could finally find out her story.

Amanda could barely drag herself out of bed she was so weak and hungry.

She had been rationing her food supply as thin as she could, but now that the money had run out, she literally had nothing. She had resorted to dumpster diving behind the local diners, but that wasn't enough.

It wouldn't be long before the electricity and water would be shut off, too.

She had tried early on to get a part-time job, but either places in Hawkins weren't in the mood to hire a 16-year-old or they asked too many questions.

She shut her eyes and debated about just staying in bed and waiting to die.

But a voice deep inside told her to go to school that day.

"My name's Jonathan," he said, sticking out his hand to her when she climbed onto the stool next to him. She gave him a half-smile and looked down at the countertop. He dropped his hand.

"Amanda," she said so softly he almost didn't hear her.

Their teacher handed out the instructions and began droning about dissection.

Jonathan tried to pay attention but out of the corner of his eye he could tell that something was wrong with Amanda. She had slouched forward and he wondered if he should ask her if she was okay.

By the time the frogs were presented and knives provided, Amanda was fading fast.

Jonathan caught her before she collapsed to the floor, sliding an arm around her waist. Amanda flung an arm around his neck to brace herself.

"Mr. Byers? Ms. Greer? What's going on?" their teacher Mr. Wilson asked, coming up to their table.

"I think it was something I ate," Amanda muttered, still clinging to Jonathan, leaning into him.

"May we be excused? I should take her to the nurse," he pleaded with Mr. Wilson.

Mr. Wilson waved them on. Jonathan eased Amanda back onto the stool long enough to shove his stuff into his backpack and do the same for her. He then shouldered both packs and practically carried her out of the classroom.

"No nurse," she said as they entered the hallway. "Can you just take me home?"

"But you're sick," Jonathan worriedly countered. "You should see the nurse. She can help."

"No nurse," Amanda said again, as forcefully as she could, trying to pull away from him and stumbling. Jonathan caught her again and nodded.

"Okay, no nurse," he said. He led her to the parking lot and eased her into his car. She fleetingly thought about her bike—she had stopped driving the truck when the tank hit empty—but the thought flitted away as they pulled out of the parking lot.

"Where do I go? I don't know where you live," Jonathan said, looking at her. She had managed to buckle herself in, but she was so tired, she leaned her head against the window and shut her eyes.

She must have dozed off because the next thing she knew she was being carried.

When Amanda didn't answer, Jonathan knew she had passed out. He decided to take her to his house, and hopefully when she woke up, she could tell him what to do.

He knew his mom would be at work and Will would be going to Mike's after school, so at least they wouldn't be bombarding him with questions he didn't even have answers to.

Once parked, he shouldered their packs before carefully unbuckling her and lifting her out of the seat. He carried her inside and paused for a moment before taking her to his bedroom.

Jonathan gently deposited her on his bed before stepping back and dropping their packs to the floor. He stood there chewing on his thumb when she stirred.

"Where am I?" Amanda asked, her eyes fluttering open.

"My house," Jonathan replied. "You passed out before you could tell me how to get to yours."

She struggled to sit up and he helped her sit on the edge of the bed, staying pressed against her side to keep her upright.

"What's wrong with you?" Jonathan asked. Amanda let out a snort.

"What's not wrong with me would be the better question," she muttered.

Jonathan questioningly gazed at her and Amanda sighed.

"Any chance I could get something to eat? I will tell you whatever you want to know if you feed me first," she said. Jonathan grinned at her.

They quietly sat at the dining table eating bologna sandwiches and chips. Amanda ate like she was starving, downing two sandwiches and half the bag of chips, Jonathan observed.

"If it looks like I'm starving, it's because I am," Amanda said between her final bites. She wiped her hands on her jeans and then sat back in the chair before spilling her life story without any prompting from Jonathan.

"My mom died when I was 6 and my dad disappeared three months ago. Without a trace. I mean, his truck was in the driveway, his keys were on the table, his work clothes in the hamper. I waited and waited the whole weekend and realized he was never coming back," she said, looking away from Jonathan.

It dawned on Jonathan that the monster must have taken her dad and he reached out to comfort her but she abruptly stood. She wandered over to one of the windows.

"I heard your brother miraculously returned. I was hoping my dad would, too, but as the weeks passed, I knew he must be dead," Amanda said. She swallowed.

"I also knew if I told anyone, they'd take me and put me in one of those homes for orphans. So I didn't," she added. "But now the money has run out and I don't have any way to pay for food or the bills."

She didn't know why she was telling Jonathan all this. She started to head to his bedroom to get her pack.

He stepped up beside her and stopped her.

"You can stay here, with me," he said, staring into her eyes. Amanda shook her head.

"That's nice of you, but you don't even know me. And what would your mom say?" she said.

"We know what it's like to go without and we know what it's like to lose someone. You can stay here for as long as you need," he pleaded.

Amanda relented long enough to ask if she could take a nap before she decided. He nodded.

She pulled off her boots and stripped off her flannel shirt before crawling into Jonathan's bed. He started to shut the bedroom door when she asked him to stay.

He toed off his own boots and ditched his flannel shirt before joining her. She rolled onto her side and scooted her back against him. He automatically wrapped an arm around her waist in a light embrace.

Jonathan didn't mean to fall asleep but her warm body lured him.

"Jonathan Paul Byers!"

His mother's voice yanked him out of his nap and he shot straight up, startling Amanda, who been using his arm as a pillow.

Disoriented, she looked around, trying to remember where she was.

Jonathan scampered out of bed, gently grabbed his mom by the arm and led her into the hallway.

"What is going on?" Joyce sternly hissed. She was not only reeling from the shock of a girl in her son's bed with him, but that there was a girl present in the house, period.

"Amanda needs some place to crash for a while and I told her she could stay here," Jonathan explained. "We were taking a nap. That's all. I promise."

Joyce raised an eyebrow; there were so many questions, she didn't

know where to begin.

"Who is she? I've never heard you mention her before. And where are her parents? Why isn't she at home with them?" Joyce replied.

Jonathan pulled his mother farther away from his bedroom and lowered his voice.

"Her mom died when she was young and her dad mysteriously disappeared right before we got Will back. I think the monster got him," he said. "She has nothing. No food, no money, nobody."

Joyce sympathetically looked at her teenage son. He had a good heart and she didn't know how she had gotten so lucky.

"Please, Mom? She can have my room. I'll bunk in with Will or sleep on the couch," Jonathan pleaded.

The fact that he would part with his room told Joyce that Jonathan was serious.

"Okay," Joyce said, giving in. Jonathan gave her a bear hug before retreating into his room to tell Amanda.

2 MONTHS AFTER WILL CAME HOME

"Dinner's ready!" Amanda shouted as she set the spaghetti and meatballs on the dining room table.

Since she had all but been adopted by the Byers, she had assimilated herself into their world, taking her share of the chores and offering to cook. She helped Will with his homework when he needed it and even changed the oil on Joyce's car (a skill she had learned with her dad).

Above all, she and Jonathan were inseparable. They had found kindred souls in each other, spending much of their down time together listening to music or being artistic—him with his photographs and her with her drawings—and not saying a word.

Sometimes they fell asleep on his—now her—bed with the radio on, curled into each other. It became such a habit that Jonathan ended

up just moving back into his bedroom.

Once she discovered what had happened, Joyce wasn't particularly fond of the idea of the two of them sleeping together night after night, but she didn't have the heart to separate them either.

Jonathan and Will appeared at table at the same time, jockeying to be the first to get a plate. Amanda grinned at them when Joyce playfully pushed them both back.

"Boys, take a seat or you get nothing," Joyce commanded. They dutifully moved to their seats while Amanda brought over the French bread.

A horn honked outside and everyone looked out the window to see Chief Hopper. Joyce blushed.

2. First Time For Everything

3 MONTHS AFTER WILL CAME HOME

Amanda heard Will retching in the bathroom and asked him if he was okay. She started to open the bathroom door but he hoarsely called out that he was fine.

She waited by the door anyway and when Will came out, he was pale and gave her a strange look.

"Will, what's wrong?" Amanda asked, concerned. She knelt in front of him and peered into his face. His eyes seemed slightly glazed over.

Will shook his head.

"Nothing," he said, clearing his throat and giving her a weak smile.

Amanda touched his forehead. He didn't seem to have a fever, but he seemed off.

Jonathan rounded the corner and spotted them in the hallway.

"He says he's fine, but he was throwing up," Amanda told Jonathan, ignoring the dirty look from Will.

"Will?" Jonathan said, reaching for his little brother.

"I said I'm fine! Really!" Will said, pulling back from Amanda and shying from Jonathan's touch. With one final glance at them, he disappeared in his bedroom and shut the door.

Amanda and Jonathan looked at each other.

She stood and pressed close to him.

"That's not the first time, either," she whispered. "But he doesn't seem sick. I can't tell what's wrong."

Jonathan frowned at Will's bedroom door.

Amanda woke with a start.

The house was dark. She reached for Jonathan, who wasn't there. Panic seared through her.

He had finally told her the truth about Will's disappearance and his theory about what happened to her dad. She knew it was true the moment Jonathan suggested it.

Amanda listened for a minute, then crawled out of bed and wandered into the hallway. She knew Joyce was out with Hopper and Will was spending the night at Mike's.

She heard the toilet flush and ran smack into Jonathan.

"Hey! You okay?" he said, steadying her.

She breathed a sigh of relief and pressed her face into his chest. Maybe the monster wasn't out to get her.

Jonathan held her until she stepped away. Amanda grabbed his hand and nearly dragged him back to the bedroom.

They laid there under the covers facing each other when she spoke.

"Ever thought about us, you know ..." she asked shyly, touching his jaw. If the light had been on, she knew he would have reddened.

"What? We haven't even kissed," he nervously replied.

"Then let's change that," Amanda said, eyeing him as she leaned in.

Jonathan pulled her close, his mouth on hers, his legs tangled with hers. Amanda could feel his bulge pressed against her hip.

She moved a hand inside his boxers, gently stroking him, and he nearly rocketed off the bed.

"You don't want to?" she whispered, looking at him.

"Yes, I want to," he panted, easing toward her again. "I've just never, I

mean, no one's ever done that before."

Both naked, Amanda welcomed Jonathan into her arms. He settled between her thighs. She reached down to help guide him in.

"Make sure you pull out before you come, okay?" she softly instructed. He nodded, biting back a moan as he entered her. She arched up to meet him, sighing as he slid in deep.

They didn't really find a rhythm that first time and he barely pulled out in time, spilling across her abdomen, before collapsing on her.

"If you get some condoms, you can stay in next time," Amanda huskily murmured in his neck. He eventually rolled off her and they fumbled for their clothes, not wanting to get caught.

They got really good at having sex after that. They usually tried to do it before anyone got home or would sneak into the woods after dinner with the pretense of his camera or her pencils in hand.

One afternoon they went from listening to music and touching to stripping and him covering her body with his. In their rush to come together, they forgot to completely close the bedroom door.

Both were in a post-orgasmic haze, Jonathan still inside of her, when Will called out.

"Jonathan, when you get done, can you come help me?" Will hoarsely said.

Amanda furiously blushed, hiding her face in Jonathan's neck, as Jonathan turned his head to see his brother in the doorway, his back to them.

"Sure, Will. I'll be there in a minute," Jonathan huskily replied. Will disappeared down the hall and Jonathan glanced at Amanda.

"Sorry," he apologized for not closing the door. She shook her head and touched his face.

"It's my fault, too," she said. Neither of them had heard Will come home. "Go check on Will. He didn't sound good."

Jonathan untangled himself from her, stowed the condom in a bag under the bed, and hurriedly dressed. He firmly shut the door on his way out. Amanda rolled over and buried her face in the pillow, telling herself to get over being embarrassed and get dressed.

Jonathan went to Will's room but he wasn't there. He found him in the bathroom.

"What's wrong, buddy?" Jonathan asked, pushing the door open. His little brother was sitting on the toilet, hunched over, his arms wrapped around his stomach.

Will shakily pointed to the sink.

Jonathan peered at the sink and jumped back startled. There were three dark green slugs writhing around, fighting to go down the drain.

"Where the hell did those things come from?" Jonathan yelled, looking at Will. Will tapped his chest.

"Me. They came from inside me," Will choked.

Jonathan knelt in front his brother, looked his brother straight in the face, and pushed Will's hair out of his eyes. It suddenly made since why Will had been more quiet than usual.

"Why didn't you tell me before?" Jonathan asked. "This has been going on since we rescued you, hasn't it?"

Will nodded, crying. He had thought it would go away, but instead it had become more intense, and now he was scared.

"What if I become one of those monsters?" Will whined.

Jonathan hugged his brother close. Will clung to him.

"I won't let that happen," Jonathan soothingly said. "We will find a way to fix this."

Jonathan angled the spatula and shoved the second slug toward the rim of glass jar Amanda was holding. The first slug was attempting to escape out of the jar.

Amanda shook the jar to stop first slug as Jonathan scooped up the second slug with the spatula. He grabbed the jar from her, slinging the second slug on top of the first one and sealing the lid.

The third slug had managed to wiggle down the drain before Amanda could bring the jar.

Will continued to sit on the toilet seat, but at least his tears had dried as he watched Jonathan and his girlfriend wrangle the slugs.

"What now?" Will hiccupped.

Jonathan gave him a half-smile as Amanda peered at the trapped slugs.

"We're going to take these to the biology lab and have Mr. Wilson look at them," he said.

"But you won't tell him about me, right?" Will pleaded, glancing between Jonathan and Amanda.

"Of course not! I'm just going to tell him I found these in our backyard," Jonathan said. Will looked relieved.

Amanda and Jonathan wondered what they could do to help Will.

If they told Joyce, she would flip and insist on a doctor. It would mean Will would be in a hospital indefinitely poked and prodded as he underwent tests and they didn't think he would handle that well.

If they told Hopper, he would probably go ape shit about the feds experimenting on children.

If they told Will's friends, Mike, Dustin, and Lucas would try to investigate and help research the problem but might wind up getting in danger themselves.

They figured Mr. Wilson might be their only hope—at least until they could figure out what the slugs were and how they might affect Will's body.

3. Reaching for You

A/N: Sorry for the delay! No excuses. Definitely more to come. Thanks for reading!

OVER 3 MONTHS AFTER WILL CAME HOME

"It's not like anything I've ever seen," Mr. Wilson said when Amanda and Jonathan presented two slugs to him after school.

The slugs seemed to go comatose when he poured saline solution in the jar. He peered at them and then at the couple.

"You said you found them in your backyard?" Mr. Wilson asked. "Can you tell me a little more about how you found them? Did you take any samples of the area around them? You might have discovered a new species!"

Jonathan internally groaned at Mr. Wilson's excitement. How were they going to get out of this without telling the truth? Without missing a beat, Amanda smiled and spoke.

"Actually, Mr. Wilson, they came from our mutt Charlie," she smoothly said. "We let him out to do his business and he barfed them up in the backyard."

Jonathan nodded, relieved she could think so quick on her feet.

"We wondered if they might be like a tapeworm or something that feeds off a host?" she added.

Mr. Wilson raised an eyebrow thoughtfully.

"A parasite?" Mr. Wilson surmised, staring at the slugs again. "Interesting theory!"

Jonathan peripherally looked at Amanda and gave her a slight smile. She subtly caressed his hand.

"I'd like to test your theory," Mr. Wilson said, switching his gaze back to them.

"How do you mean?" Amanda asked.

"I will ask one of my colleagues to provide live subjects to test on," Mr. Wilson replied.

"Humans?" Jonathan asked, aghast.

"Oh, no! Of course not, Mr. Byers. Animals used for experiments. It's all perfectly legal, I assure you. Do you mind if I keep these?" Mr. Wilson asked.

"Sure," Amanda answered.

"Has your dog exhibited any unusual symptoms, not acting like himself, behaving oddly?" Mr. Wilson asked as he placed the jar on his desk.

Jonathan shook his head.

"Not really. He whined a little when he coughed those up," he said.

"Well, if he starts acting strange or any more of these appear, let me know," Mr. Wilson said, scratching his chin. "You might think about taking him to the vet to have him treated, although I'm not sure they will have any idea what to treat him with."

"Thank you for your help, Mr. Wilson," Amanda said, wrapping an arm around Jonathan's arm.

"When do you think you'll know what those things are?" Jonathan asked, nodding at the jar.

"I'm interested in starting as soon as I can, so I plan to call my colleague shortly," Mr. Wilson replied, tapping the jar. "These are very fascinating."

Amanda sat cross-legged on her bed with a drawing pad in her lap, and Will sat across from her, mirroring her. Music was blaring from the stereo. Both Jonathan and Joyce were at work.

They had started challenging each other to fast draw contests, at

which Will had proven he was not only faster, but better.

They were both furiously sketching when Will stopped and lifted his pad for her appraisal. Amanda sighed and nodded.

"You got me again," she tersely replied as if she was mad, but there was a gleam in her eye. Will gave her a toothy grin and then leaned back on his hands.

"Do you love my brother?" he curiously asked.

Amanda stopped her pencil mid-stroke and looked at him.

"I hadn't really thought about it. Why do you ask?" she asked.

Will shrugged.

"Jonathan always takes care of my mom and me," he replied with a sober expression. "I guess I wonder who will take care of him when I'm gone."

"You're not going anywhere, Will," Amanda said, knowing he was worried they hadn't found a solution to his condition yet. It had been nearly two weeks since they had taken the slugs to Mr. Wilson. "We will find a way to cure you."

Will gave her a sad smile.

"Will you take care of Jonathan anyway?" he asked. Amanda tossed her pad aside and leaned forward to start tickling him.

"Of course," she replied. He squirmed and giggled as he tried to escape her fingers.

"Promise?" he howled.

"Promise!" she said as they fell into a laughing mess on the floor.

Amanda pulled the casserole dish from the oven where she had been warming it and scooped out some of it on a plate before setting it in front of Jonathan.

He smiled at her gratefully and dug in. He had worked a double shift and he was tired and hungry. She kissed him on the cheek before bidding him goodnight and heading to bed.

After cleaning up the kitchen, Jonathan took a quick shower.

As he pulled on a clean T-shirt and shorts, he watched Amanda's sleeping form and his thoughts drifted to Nancy.

The two of them still talked at school and he and Amanda even hung out with her and Steve from time to time. He cared about Nancy like he always had—especially after what they had been through together—but he realized his feelings for Amanda surpassed what he felt for Nancy.

Amanda rolled to her side with her back to him as he crawled in next to her. He scooted against her and wrapped an arm around her waist.

Jonathan was pretty sure he was in love with her.